

CLAIMS

- 1 1. An entitlement system for vendor services to be provided by a
2 vendor to customers, said services having respective entitlement-
3 verification rules, said entitlement system comprising:
4 an entitlement registry to which each of said services registers so
5 that said registry associates a respective entitlement-verification
6 ruleset with each of said services, said registry associating a first
7 entitlement-verification ruleset with a first service; and
8 a verification function for receiving entitlement requests from
9 said services and for returning entitlement-verification results to
10 said services, said verification function returning to said first
11 service a first entitlement-verification result in response to a first
12 entitlement request from said first service, said first entitlement-
13 verification result being a function of said first entitlement-
14 verification ruleset.
- 1 2. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 1 further
2 comprising an entitlement-reconciliation function for executing
3 reconciliation procedures yielding entitlement-reconciliation results
4 in response negative entitlement-verification results.
- 1 3. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 2 wherein a first
2 entitlement-reconciliation result is achieved by executing a first
3 entitlement-reconciliation procedure associated in said registry with
4 said first service.
- 1 4. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 3 wherein said
2 reconciliation function, in executing said first reconciliation
3 procedure, sends an asynchronous notice to a first customer of an
4 opportunity for entitlement reconciliation.

1 5. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 4 wherein said
2 reconciliation function establishes a reconciliation website to which
3 said first customer is directed by said notice, said reconciliation
4 website embodying a process through which said first customer can
5 become entitled to said first service.

1 6. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 2 further
2 comprising a reconciliation database, said entitlement-reconciliation
3 function storing said first entitlement-reconciliation request in said
4 reconciliation database while said reconciliation function
5 implements said first entitlement-reconciliation procedure.

1 7. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 6 wherein said
2 entitlement-reconciliation function communicates synchronously
3 with said customer without an intervening asynchronous notice in
4 response to a failed second entitlement-verification result from a
5 second entitlement request by a second service of said vendor
6 services.

1 8. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 2 further
2 comprising a firewall, said entitlement-verification function and said
3 entitlement-reconciliation function residing on opposite sides of
4 said firewall.

1 9. An entitlement system as recited in Claim 1 wherein said
2 registry also stores communications instructions for respective
3 services specifying how respective entitlement-verification results
4 are to be returned to said respective services.

1 10. A method comprising:
2 receiving a first service request for service to first customer,
3 in response to said first service request, making a first
4 entitlement request;
5 in response to said first entitlement request determining whether
6 or not a first entitlement-verification result is a fail;
7 in the event said first entitlement-verification result is not a fail,
8 performing said service for said customer;
9 in the event said first entitlement result is a fail, making a first
10 entitlement reconciliation request;
11 in response to said first entitlement-reconciliation request,
12 asynchronously notifying said first customer of a first entitlement-
13 reconciliation process that leads to reconciliation when executed by
14 said first customer; and
15 in the event that said customer executes said first entitlement-
16 reconciliation process, performing said service for said customer
17 without requiring resubmission of said first service request.

1 11. A method as recited in Claim 9 wherein said making said
2 first entitlement reconciliation request involves transferring said
3 reconciliation request through a firewall.

1 12. A method as recited in Claim 10 wherein said first
2 entitlement result is determined by retrieving account information
3 associated with said first customer and applying a first entitlement
4 ruleset associated with said first service to said information.

1 13. A method as recited in Claim 12 further comprising
2 registering said first service so that said first reconciliation
3 procedure and said first verification ruleset are associated with an
4 identifier for said first service.

1 14. A method as recited in Claim 10 further comprising:
2 receiving a second service request for a second service of said
3 vendor for a second customer;
4 in response to said second service request, making a second
5 entitlement request;
6 in response to said second entitlement request, determining
7 whether or not a second entitlement-verification result is a fail;
8 in the event said entitlement-verification result is a fail, making a
9 second entitlement reconciliation request; and
10 in response to said second entitlement-reconciliation request,
11 presenting said second customer with a second process for
12 reconciling entitlement synchronously without asynchronous
13 notification.

1 15. A method as recited in Claim 14 further comprising
2 registering said first and second services so that said first
3 entitlement-reconciliation procedure is associated with an identifier
4 for said first service and so that a second entitlement-reconciliation
5 procedure specifying said second entitlement-reconciliation process
6 is associated with an identifier for said second service.

1 16. A computer program set on computer-readable media, said
2 computer program set comprising:
3 an entitlement registry for registering vendor services along with
4 respective entitlement verification rulesets; and
5 an entitlement-verification function for providing entitlement
6 results in response to respective entitlement requests by vendor
7 services in response to customer requests for those services, said
8 entitlement results being generated by applying respective
9 entitlement rulesets for the services making said entitlement
10 requests to account information gathered in response to said
11 entitlement requests.

1 17. A computer program set as recited in Claim 16 wherein said
2 an entitlement-verification ruleset applied by said verification
3 function in response to a first entitlement request by a first vendor
4 service is distinct from a second entitlement-verification ruleset
5 applied by said entitlement-verification function in response to a
6 second entitlement request by a second vendor service.

1 18. A computer program set as recited in Claim 16 further
2 comprising an entitlement-reconciliation function for providing a
3 customer a synchronous entitlement-reconciliation process when
4 the result of an entitlement request is negative.

1 19. A computer program set as recited in Claim 18 wherein said
2 entitlement reconciliation function provides for notifying said
3 customer of said process synchronously.

1 20. A computer program set as recited in Claim 18 wherein
2 entitlement reconciliation function provides for notifying said
3 customer of said process asynchronously.